2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
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571 The first thing that strikes us is the large number of constituent
619 groups in the tribe. Some of these groups are totemic, others are not,
565 they come from all points of the compass. They are not clans in the accepted sense of the word and have no functions as such. They are so interwoven with the nuclear group, the Lovedu, and with one another, that it is not easy to disentangle them; they are usually interspersed with the general population, but, for one reason here and another there, they may be more or less concentrated in some part of the country. It is chiefly through the district organization that they become linked, upon the pattern of kinship, of marriage and bride-price, with the nuclear group. These groups are not arranged in any definite hierarchy of rank, though rank is of very great importance in the society. Yet there are distinctions between them: some are as honoured as the Lovedu themselves; some are regarded as rather of lower status, though intermarriage with them is not disapproved; others, mostly of non-Sotho origin, are despised and intermarriage with them is frowned upon.

[565] This does not mean that there are institutionalized classes; there are
621 no rigid lines cutting across the society, just as there are no definite
571 functions that may be said to hold together these constituent groups.
613 Functions of a political nature are bound up with the districts, not with the constituent groups as such; some religious and ritual functions are also bound up with the districts, but most of them (except those of national importance) are connected with kin groups, and this never means the whole constituent group and, indeed, usually not the lineage, but people from both sides of the family. Yet the lineage as a descent group has at least legal significance and to it are attached certain rights. On the whole, however, the lineages pale into significance beside the marriage or the bilateral kin groups. There is structural tension between the group which gives the brides and the group which gives the cattle; but one notices in ordinary life not so much the tension as the elaborate measures for maintaining good relations. Not only do the relations between these two groups obtrude themselves more prominently than those within the patrilineal lineages, but it is the main concern of judicial proceedings in the *khɔrɔ*, the most impressive feature of public life, to preserve harmony between them. There is ample reason for this emphasis because the whole social structure and, through it, the whole tribal system and the strongest bonds with the queen, depend upon the proper functioning of these groups. And these are again a part of, and supported by, the bilateral kin, who, with the cattle, the one relying on the other, constitute the ultimate basis of the social structure.

[561] There are also age-groupings in the society. They have some wide
571 integrating functions, but on the whole the organization into regiments is unimpressive and for national purposes of little value. The hierarchy of age plays a part of importance, however, as a regulative device; but it is not coincident with the hierarchy of rank and thus often occasions serious tensions in the social structure. Finally, we should remind the reader, though we cannot deal with them here, of groupings brought about by modern conditions. There is the more or less compact Christian group, with its divergent interests and loyalties, and the very scattered

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571 619 a person who, not merely when he has no legal father, takes the totem or secondary name of another group. We can, therefore, make no off-hand deductions from the names. Identity or similarity of name may or may not imply similar ancestry. A positive assertion of similarity or identity based upon the similarity or identity of the descriptive name is not conclusive; it may merely reflect a present sense of being related, important in itself, but with no basis in history or fact. It is by no means easy to deal with a situation of such infinite complexity; and from our present point of view there is no need to do so. Except where the name is significant for some other purpose, not that of reckoning relationship as such, and except within the functioning unit, little attention is given to these names. For the purposes of rank within the tribe, against other tribal units, it is important to designate oneself, not Elephant or Lion, but Lovedu. But when we have said this as regards the general position, we have also, as in everything else, to begin pointing out exceptions.

571 ●565 619 An Elephant of Ravothaṭa has as such nothing in common with an Elephant, say, of Selowa. Their backgrounds, their origins, even their customs, are conceived to be different. The Elephant of Ravothaṭa have come in recent years to tolerate the Elephant of Selowa; intermarriage is beginning to establish bonds, and common allegiance to the queen is breaking down the old barriers; yet on the whole an Elephant of Selowa is a *murṣka*, a person of the low country, not fit to aspire to such high positions in the tribe as the Elephants of Ravothaṭa. The *murṣka* is, however, much closer to the Ravothaṭa than the Shangana-Ṭonga Elephants; the latter are not unlike the lower classes, the dwellers in the slums, as compared with the aristocracy, among us. Through sagacity and some forms of achievement, they can rise in the scale, but as yet intermarriage is frowned upon and there are some strong barriers between them. What we wish to point out is that the Elephants of Ravothaṭa are far more closely associated with their immediate blood relatives and their relatives-in-law, whether they be Elephants or Lions or Pigs or what not, than with Elephants of Selowa or other Elephants, including far-off *varavothata*; and by far off we mean not merely any one of the sub-group within which kinship terms and behaviour obtain, but also any one of this lineage who lives far away or with whom there is no agreement. And yet there is something more to the matter. The history of the Ravothaṭa, their very early association with the royal group as messengers on the way from Rhodesia, the fact that since the earliest times their heads held an extensive district and still do, their prestige as makers of the skin of the sacred drums, all this and more places them in a special position. These things distinguish the Ravothaṭa as a group; they are like the crest of a noble family or like its traditions. They are scattered all over the tribe, it is true, and any ordinary member of the group would not presume to give himself airs because of the achievements of the past. They never act together, except within the limits of the interested family or lineage, just as happens anywhere else; yet there is some consciousness of belonging together, as indeed there is among families among us.

The same may be said of any other groups in Vuloyedu. There are, for instance, the *vamavulana*, so closely linked to the royal group to-day

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that they are called the *kwɛvo* of Tshazi. Their history also dates back to the earliest times, when they were Tshazi quite unrelated to the *kwɛvo*. They are now and have been since the time of Khiali (*c.* 1740) the great maternal uncles of the royal group. They have their distinctive praise-titles and also a distinctive laudatory response. If one of the Mavulana is called by his superior he answers by prefixing his words with the praise *moni*. These laudatory responses (for which there is no generic name) are found only among a few groups. The Ravothaṭa say *zemula*, the Crocodiles of Vudupi *myagani*, the *kwɛvo mulemyazi*, the Dipanyika *nɛpya*, some Venda (those from Twsale) *sigo*, the Khaḍa *khɛntlo*, and the Lions of Magwale *maan*. This laudatory response honours both the speaker and the person addressed; and it occurs sometimes in the great praises of the group—for instance, 'Mavulana of Vutshazi! At Makhifaja, the place of pasturing, we pasture our cattle in autumn; at Ḍaja it is that the cattle graze in spring. We are *moni*.' A specific response does not, however, belong to the whole group. You may hear a *kwɛvo* say *mule-myazi*, but, after all, the Tswale also call themselves *kwɛvo*, and they say *sigo*, while the Mahasha, who are *kwɛvo rathɔle*, may answer *mulovedu rathɔle*, and a Crocodile of Vudupi, *vudupi vya mamyaka*.

The cluster, such as all the Pigs or all the Elephants, never has one common praise-title. One does not even find a common praise for many groups or sub-groups, such as the Crocodiles, say, of Vudupi; and the same is true of most of the groups. The members of some of the groups and sub-groups use common praise-titles, but the really live praises, those that stir people and stand as a symbol of their unity, are the district praises. They are taught in the *vyali* initiation and are sung when beer is brought by the district to the queen. The district praise may or may not coincide with the praise of the sub-group or lineage of the head of the district. The Mudiga of Madumani, for instance, one of the sub-groups of the Mudiga, identify themselves closely with the royal group, but their distinctive praise-title refers to the mountain of their district, just as the distinctive praise of the Mudiga of Mareroni, another district, refers to the place name as well as to a forebear to whom the district was originally given. In addition, both Madumani and Mareroni have the old Mudiga praise, 'You are hemmed in [by lions]' (*le a digwa*). The local district praise is far more alive than the group or sub-group praise, if it exists at all, in the case of people living in the district who are not Mudiga, but Crocodiles or Elephants or Lions and so on. It is thus far more usually a locality than a group praise, though, with regard to the people of the lineage of the head, it often is both. The exquisite poetry of these praise-names cannot easily be rendered in English, '*Vuuga vya uuga bula ea na*', the praise of Levibi, we may translate as 'When it thunders at Vuuga, the rain rains', but we cannot recapture the rumbling of the *u*'s nor the pattering of the *a*'s.

Let us look more closely at the Crocodiles. They are by no means a real group at all. At Matsui, where one of them is a district head, they are very closely linked to the royal nucleus; the mother of Matsui was a relative of Mamujaji the mother of the first Mujaji, and it is at Matsui that the cow Mamujaji, belonging to the head of the district, is dedicated

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643 789 766 carriages, abortions, and people dying of any severe coughing illness prevent rain from falling unless specially buried in wet soil is found with variations all over the Lowveld, among Sotho and Shangana-Tonga alike.

643 588 644 [557] Women rulers have their 'wives' just as though they were men, and a peculiar feature of Lobedu culture is the large number of wives or *bathanoni* of the queen. Every Lobedu induna sends a daughter to be a *mothanoni* of the queen, as do also any of the nobility who wish to be on a good footing with her; and these, together with girls sent by foreign tribes as gifts for rain, form a large harem. *Bathanoni* of the chief occupy an honoured position at the Head Kraal, have, on the whole, less work than ordinary women and are a source of honour to their family who through them become privileged to call the queen their *tsetse*—bridegroom or son-in-law. They may be given in marriage to relatives of the queen or to commoners, in which case the peculiar situation arises of their children preferring [551] to call themselves sons and daughters of the queen, using the surname Modjadji, to taking the lineage name of their father. Often, however, the *bathanoni* remain with the queen, the ideal being to remain virgin for some years, after which they are given their own hut in the village and permission to have children. A *mothanoni* of noble birth [565] ranks higher than a commoner and can even bear the heir to the throne when the queen herself is barren. Other Lowveld chiefs do [184] not receive daughters from their headmen, though the Khaha and Letswalo used to accept girls from foreign chiefs for rain as did the Lobedu. These women became a link and source of friendship between the two tribes and, especially among Lobedu, played a real part in the gradual growth and influence of the tribe. Even the great Ngungunyane once sent women to Modjadji for rain, and there are, to-day still, at her head kraal sisters and daughters of important chiefs in the Northern Transvaal, though money and cattle have now been substituted for women in rain transactions.

643 [171] The legal heir to the throne is, in the Lowveld, the eldest son of the chief wife, who should always be the daughter of the chief's mother's brother. The cattle for this marriage are not, as among the Pedi and one or two Highveld tribes, contributed by all the headmen, nor are the fires in the country extinguished on the occasion of the marriage,

5:Krige E-5 (1936-1938,1961-1962) 1964
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see. But the fruits of her labour go to swell the property only of that unit of the lineage which constitutes the wife's own 'house', the independence and rights of which must be respected even by the husband.

Bride-price generally consists of some five to eight head of cattle, a number of goats and money (to the extent of at least £5). Today people sometimes pay a sum of money instead of cattle—£40 in a recent marriage. This represents eight head of cattle, bride-price cattle having been regarded as equivalent to £5 each, irrespectively of market prices, for the past fifty years at least. The amount given is, however, never a fixed one as the passing of bride-price initiates a continuous relationship of gift exchange between the two families concerned and the marriage puts the bridegroom under a lifelong obligation to extend economic help to his wife's people. '*Monoalo a o fede*—bride-price is never completed', it is said. When the wife's people have to pay a fine, if they need cattle or goats for the marriage of a son, they will approach their *tsetse* (or *mudzhulu*)—son-in-law. The man who has provided a wife has given something 'bigger than cattle' and is in this sense in a superior position. On the other hand the son-in-law (*mudzhulu*) or wife-receiver is accorded great honour by his wife's people and once a year at least receives a gift of beer and grain. The relationship is one of reciprocity and the son-in-law must for his part also show respect for his wife's people. He must ever be ready to grant their requests and may never refuse. There is no evidence for Leach's suggestion that the Lobedu have a 'kind of Kachin structure in reverse' with a 'strong tendency for the wife-receiving group to rank the higher'.[1] In endogamous unions in the Lobedu royal group both husband and wife may be members of the same lineage. Lobedu society is, moreover, not a stratified society though the royal lineage enjoys great prestige.

Fully to understand Lobedu marriage one must approach it also from the point of view of the woman. Usually a uterine brother marries a wife with the cattle that have accrued from his sister's marriage. This sometimes happens in other tribes too. But where the Lobedu situation seems to be distinctive is that every woman whose marriage-cattle have been used to

[1] Leach, 1951.